

Serving tribes

The Council of Energy Resource Tribes, or CERT, is a nonprofit corporation comprised of 50 member tribes from throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The organization works with individual tribes or tribal coalitions on a project by project basis. CERT's professional staff and consultants, consisting of managers, advisors and technical staff, help tribes plan and execute projects.

By providing short-term project infrastructure and technical expertise, the organization works with members and tribal clients to achieve energy-related objectives.

DOE funds tribal technical assistance grants

The Energy Department announced March 7 that it will provide \$100,000 in technical assistance to tribes applying for Post-2004 power allocations from the Salt Lake City Area Integrated Projects.

In the SLCA/IP marketing area, 56 tribes have been identified as eligible preference customers. Western anticipates that it can allocate enough power to meet up to 65 percent of current tribal loads. But getting Federal hydropower, or the benefits of it, to tribes is no easy task.

Many do not have their own utilities (an historic requirement that has been waived for tribes), requiring some to participate in bill-crediting plans to receive benefits. But more immediately, most tribes have never before received Federal power allocations. That means they must apply for a Western power allocation. For tribes, this data-inten-

sive application process can be a seemingly insurmountable obstacle.

Most tribes lack the technical expertise to complete an allocation application.

Western and the Council of Energy Resource Tribes have co-hosted numerous workshops throughout the West designed to educate and increase tribal understanding of allocation procedures.

"While [Western] contract specialists have been as helpful as they can, the educational process on the part of tribal governments has simply not progressed at a speed that allows every tribe to make appropriate, informed decisions regarding these valuable [allocation] contracts," explained A. David Lester, CERT executive director in a Nov. 24 letter to Western.

Preparing applicant profile data is a particular stumbling block for many tribes. Application information required includes the number and types of customers to be served and a history of actual load use. Many tribes do not have this information or require technical assistance to obtain it.

DOE's \$100,000 grant will go to CERT, which will work with the 56 eligible tribes to ensure they receive needed technical support. While DOE will decide how the grant money will be distributed, Western will disburse the funds.

"This grant will help us reach these tribes—to help them realize their opportunity to apply for Federal power," said **Lyle Johnson**, public utilities specialist with the CRSP Management Center. "It will help those member tribes who may not realize their opportunities to 'catch up' and eventually make their own decisions about their energy needs."

According to Johnson, tribes involved are located in Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah and part of Nevada.

